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ABSTRACT

The conclusions of the UNESCO-FIPLV symposium on the education of the children of migrant workers are reported here. It is felt that the scope and nature of migration creates many different and complex interrelated problems that call for interdisciplinary approaches, both on a national and an international level. The objectives of the education of migrant children are to: (1) integrate them into a multicultural society; (2) make it possible for them to enjoy equal opportunities both in educational and sociocultural development; (3) foster their native language and culture; (4) involve the migrant parents in the education of their children; (5) involve the various countries in a cooperative educational effort; and (6) make all members of society aware of the role that everyone can play in the education and social integration of migrant children. The recommendations of the symposium to the various countries involved deal with: (1) the reception of migrant families into the host country; (2) the placement of migrant children in schools; (3) the training and the status of teachers who will work with migrant children; (4) curriculum adaptation and certification; and (5) the assurance of integration and active participation of migrant children and their parents in school and community life. (Author/AM)

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UNESCO-FIPLV Symposium on
"Teaching the Children of Immigrants"
Munich, January 27-3 , 1975

R E P O R T

P r e a m b l e

The participants in the (UNESCO/FIPLV) Symposium, devoted to the teaching of language to immigrant children, would respectfully like to draw the attention of governments to several measures that should be taken with relation to the education of the children of migrant workers.

Studies of the phenomenon of migration do not fail to reveal its complexity. The process might be defined as the movement of individuals and groups from one area to another with the intention of a change of residence which may or may not be lasting. Multiple motives and causes of a social and economic as well as of an individual nature lie behind migration, among those demographic, social, psychological, political, cultural and economic factors.

Several trends of migration may be discerned: the classical kind is that of migration from rural to industrialized areas; a more recent kind is that of migration between industrialized areas, and there are various other trends.

Obviously the scope and nature of migration creates many different complex interrelated problems which call for interdisciplinary approaches, both on a national and an international level.

Migration today involves virtually all nations and races creating new patterns of ethnic, racial and linguistic minorities in the host country as well as in the native country. While members of all social classes are involved, unskilled and skilled workers constitute without doubt the largest group. Although the intention of many of these migrant workers may be to return to their native country at one time or another, experience shows that the majority of families remain in the new country. Estimates of about 70 percent have been made.

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This situation calls for many kinds of provision to be made in the host country as well as in the native countries. In addition, it demands more intense international cooperation than ever. Migration is likely to increase even more in the future. This means that efforts must be made n o w . Financial investment in provision made for migrants and especially for the children of migrants will give a high rate of pay-off at the local as well as the governmental level. On the other hand, negligence now will produce high costs in the future.

In spite of the numerous problems migration creates, it should be seen as positive. There is a distinct contribution from foreign families to the cultural enrichment of the host country, and the school is the privileged place where exchange and contacts can be developed. A primary result seems to be to make for a higher rate of social mobility on an international level. This desire for

social mobility should be recognized and encouraged. Failure to do so will diminish the positive contribution which migrant workers can make to a society, will place a financial strain on the host country and will hinder its economic prosperity.

The recommendations which follow are designed primarily for children of compulsory school age. They may be equally applicable in pre-school programs such as nursery schools, kindergarten, and preparatory classes, as well as in language-vocational programs which may follow compulsory schooling. It is expected that local, regional or national modifications will be necessary because of factors such as the following: the number of linguistically and culturally different pupils in a school at any given grade level; the large variety in any one school or region of language and cultural backgrounds with which the children have come; the age levels of the children; the numbers of bilingual - or multilingual teachers available; the resources - such as bilingual persons, agencies, community centers existing in the community in which the school or the homes of the children are located.

The objectives and recommendations in this report stem from the diverse experiences of the Conference participants. The Country Reports each has read have shown - not surprisingly - similar problems and concerns. The members of the Symposium have accepted these Reports unanimously. The Recommendations represent not only the varied scientific interests of the participants but also - and we might say primarily - the realization that the complexity of the problem demands the best current international thinking in the related fields of linguistics, education, psychology, sociology and anthropology. The proposals put forward for further discussion and implementation reflect the recognition that interaction among pupils, teachers, parents and community is essential in working toward any viable solution.

Even more, the participants of the Symposium are convinced that it is imperative - through UNESCO and related international agencies - to develop a world-wide awareness of a problem which is rapidly increasing. Cross-cultural understanding, leading to peaceful, harmonious coexistence among peoples of all nations, is of such importance that it can be fully achieved only through international effort. The school years under the guidance of empathetic, well-prepared teachers generally are the most propitious to bring this understanding about.

Objectives

* The general object of education of the children of migrant workers is their integration into a society opened to minorities, i.e. a multicultural society that accepts the challenge set by the presence of groups of different ethnic origin.

* The schooling of foreign children should make it possible for them to enjoy equal opportunities in educational development, and in cultural and social advancement.

* The mother tongue and culture of these children should be encouraged and maintained in school and other community agencies to enable them to retain their sense of personal identity and pride in their cultural heritage.

* Parents should be actively involved in the education of their children in order to reduce the possibility of intra-family conflicts.

* As far as possible, the planning and establishment of the education of children of migrant families should be the result of a cooperative endaveour between the countries concerned. This would include matters such as exchange of personnel, jointly sponsored research studies and financial support.

* It is essential that all members of society be made aware of the role that each can play in the multi-faceted task of integrating and educating the children of migrant families.

Recommendations

1. Reception into the host-country

   (a) Attractive, brief, easily understood information in the mother-tongue should be provided before emigration, at points of entry and also in areas of settlement, to describe employment opportunities, housing availability, health and social insurance, education, consumer advice, immigration regulations, taxation, and leisure facilities. Information about religious, cultural and social associations' facilities should be provided for each ethnic group.

   (b) Public services should employ migrant officers who will actively engaged in supporting this information by informal interviews to guarantee that the information is understood, that individual problems are dealt with, and to ensure that there is continuous supervision of the processes of settlement and integration.

   (c) Accurate local information of a high standard should be disseminated through various media to the host community explaining the settlement difficulties experienced by migrant families, and their social and cultural similarities and differences so that misunderstandings may be minimised.

   (d) On reception of migrant children into school full consultation should take place between the director of the school, or representatives of the Education Authority, and the parents, about parental rights, and obligations, school services and requirements.

(e) Since the host country is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of all children, medical examinations of migrant children should take place prior to admission to school.

(f) The host country should take necessary action to ensure that previous educational experience is documented by the sender country.

2. Placement

(a) Placement policies in schools should take account of age and previous educational experience. Specific attention should be paid to migrant children who have lived in the host country for a substantial length of time and who still cannot function adequately in the normal school situation. Levels of proficiency in mother-tongue, host language and other curriculum content should be determined by interview or proficiency tests.

(b) Receiving schools should recognize that in the initial stages social and psychological difficulties may arise. Therefore well-equipped reception facilities should be established where there will be a concentration of expertise to ensure that the admission of migrant children is smoothly accomplished with a minimum of personal stress to the child but with maximum social adjustment and educational progress.

(c) Diagnostic and continuous assessment tests and procedures should be established to ensure appropriate placement in classes throughout the school career of the child.

(d) All schools should provide well-structured promotional and inter-class transfer systems to ensure that as soon as possible all children are educated in classes appropriate to their age, aptitude, ability and achievement within the mainstream of the school.

(e) For older migrant children who are illiterate and for new-comers who are nearing the end of compulsory schooling, classes should be established which make special provision for intensive courses in the host language and mother tongue, and in other subjects necessary for preparation for vocational training.

3. Teacher Training and Status

(a) In view of the multi-ethnic nature of society and the need to provide an appropriate education service teacher training colleges should, through interdepartmental co-operation, built on a basis of sound understanding and sensitivity to the multi-ethnic structure of society, ensure that

* all students are made aware of the nature of society;
* those students who elect to work with migrant children should be effectively trained to attain success with them.

(b) All teachers in all schools should, by means of further training, seek to augment their knowledge and understanding of the multi-ethnic nature of society, so that they are equipped to prepare all pupils for life in that society. They should also be aware of the continuing linguistic and educational needs of migrant children.

(c) Minimum requirements for teachers from sender countries should be a knowledge of the host language and a willingness to attend courses related to the educational aims and methods of the host country. This may be achieved through teacher-interchange and additional training programs as needed. For this group of teachers education authorities should be obliged to provide these opportunities.

(d) Professional status and conditions of employment of teachers from sender countries should be equated with those of the host country.

(e) If necessary, "length of stay" regulations should be modified with regard to teachers from sender countries, so that both these teachers and the host schools can benefit from long-term employment.

4. Curriculum and Certification

(a) Education authorities and schools should examine their curriculum for all children to discover ways in which it can be changed and extended across the whole range of age, abilities and disciplines in order to prepare pupils for life in a multi-ethnic society. For example special curriculum units in Social Studies and Humanities should provide insights into various cultures leading to an appreciation of their values.

(b) Similar units should be devised for newcomers, if necessary in their native language, and used in preparatory, reception and transition classes, giving insights into the culture of the host country.

(c) Teaching and learning materials should be developed, not for language teaching only, but also for other subjects with the migrant child in mind which will take into account the linguistic needs of the child, his previous educational experience in the sender country and his situation in the host country.

(d) School reports and education certificates issued to children in both host and sender countries should be mutually honoured.

5. Social and Cultural Provision

(a) It should be the responsibility of all personnel in the host country school to absorb the migrant children into the fellowship of the school and the "near-society" in order to prevent a feeling of isolation and alienation, to promote mutual understanding and respect between pupils as to similarities and differences in their respective cultures, and to maintain links between the school and migrant families.

(b) Foreign parents should be invited to take an active part in different kinds of school and community life by means of welcoming booklets, multi-lingual local information and personal contact, and through such activities and experiences as may be organized by parents-teacher associations.

(c) When parents have questions concerning the education and welfare of their children they should also have easy access to bilingual officers who can act as intermediaries.

(d) The school should support initiatives taken by migrant families, and groups which have a valuable contribution to make to the community life of school and society. The school should facilitate attendance at such activities.

(e) Local Education Authorities should employ bilingual welfare officers, councellors and psychologists who can maintain close contact with migrant children who may be experiencing learning and social problems, and also with their parents.

(f) The school should make allowance and provision for such matters as the various social and spiritual attitudes of migrant children in relation to special dietary laws, observances, festivals and holidays which are determined by their different religious allegiencies.